



Side-by-side

***A walk with
my military spouse***

A Guide For Senior Enlisted Spouses

Congratulations! It is my pleasure to welcome you to the elite ranks.

As you reach the most senior position of a Marine's career, you and your spouse have worked many years and you have gained a wealth of wisdom and experience along the way. This is a significant accomplishment. Thus, there are certain roles and responsibilities that come with your position and you are expected to attend more functions than years past. You must have many questions forming in your mind, to include, what about my job and my family? How will this promotion affect me? Will I have to change my lifestyle?

There are no easy answers; but, the 2000 Sergeants Major Spouse Symposium wanted to make this transition as easy as possible by contributing information and guidance from their own experiences. This booklet is only a guide to help you make the final stage of your Marine Corps career a memorable one.

On behalf of all spouses that contributed to this project, I hope you find the booklet to be helpful in some way. I wish you the very best in all your future endeavors.

Kindest regards,


Rita McMichael

A large, light gray background image of a Marine Corps Sergeant's chevron, which is a triangular rank insignia with seven horizontal stripes. The word "FORWARD" is centered in red, bold, sans-serif capital letters over the middle stripes.

FORWARD

"Side-by-side" is a guide of insights, encouragement and advice from some "seasoned" senior enlisted spouses to help new senior enlisted spouses. Hopefully the journey through this elite "walk with your military spouse" will be pleasant.

Pleased or thrilled, gratified or delighted, as you embark into the final years of the Marine Corps, you and your spouse have worked many years to reach this accomplishment. So, be happy and enjoy.

Responsibilities

As a senior enlisted spouse, you have a unique and challenging experience facing you. You have the exciting opportunity to assist others, be a role model, and mentor other spouses.

Be very understanding of your spouse; there will be a lot of demand on his/her time. There is a sponsor or liaison that can be assigned to you. Find someone to talk to. This might be a good time to call upon other senior enlisted spouses in your network.

There are certain privileges that come with this position, don't flaunt these privileges or abuse them. You represent your spouse in whatever you do.

Assisting the Spouse

Assisting the spouse is one of the most important aspects of military life. As we assist our spouse in different functions, our thought patterns have shifted to fit his/her needs. When it is time to think of family, we need their undivided attention and understanding, which we don't always receive. Working together is what makes a happy family and enables the spouse to have a productive military career. This is a very stressful position. Remember, sometimes you have to do a lot of listening, not talking. Sometimes he/she just wants to let off steam. Offer your help if you have the time and always be supportive.

Assisting your spouse is a two way street. Keep your spouse informed of your activities, so he/she can support and assist you also. Do not make decisions for your spouse without consulting him/her (avoid saying “my spouse can take care of that”).

❑ ***Some functions you should attend:***

- Change of Commands
- Pre Deployment Briefs
- Welcome Home
- Balls (more than one) and sometimes you will be required to sit at the head table
- Parades
- Other Post and Reliefs
- Teas
- Coffees

Take the first step in meeting the incoming spouse. Take him/her on a tour of base, introduce the chain of command and explain what positions he/she already holds (i.e., Key Volunteer Network, L.I.N.K.S., Enlisted Spouses Club). Keep a paper trail (turnover file) to enable spouses to take an active participative role in their positions and other volunteer positions they might become interested in (i.e., Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society, Red Cross, etc.). To assist the spouse, share as much information as possible. Be helpful by answering questions the spouse and his/her family may have.

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Turnover files should include (but are not limited to):

- ✓ Social Roster
- ✓ Key Volunteer Representatives
- ✓ L.I.N.K.S. Board Members
- ✓ Phone Tree
- ✓ A description of duties and points of contact for each position
- ✓ MCCS points of contact
- ✓ Installation phone book (if applicable)
- ✓ Other (as required)

Senior Spouse Responsibilities

Command Involvement

The senior spouse is the linchpin between command and family. Promote togetherness and a positive, nurturing environment between the two. Strive towards building a strong relationship between the command and the families; characterize this relationship by open communication and trust. A happy and secure family ultimately impacts on command readiness.

Expectations

As the senior enlisted spouse, you will be expected to be the source of knowledge, a mentor, an advisor, a listener, and a strong supporter. Keep informed of the programs aboard your base. This saves research time.

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Assume that “who, what, where, and when” will be asked. Clearly understand that you have to be the backbone of the family. Stay organized at home. Establish and maintain a schedule to avoid scheduling conflicts. Don’t be afraid to ask questions and for help, including your spouse. Help with problems when help is requested.

Roles

As the senior spouse, comfortable with it or not, there are various roles you must participate in. Just remember, respect is earned not granted.

Positions

These positions and their titles vary from command to command. Remember, as an advisor, don’t look for friends, but friendly relations.

Positions could include (and are not limited to):

- ✓ Assistant Advisor, Advisory Committee
- ✓ Advisor, Key Volunteer Network
- ✓ Advisor for Family Readiness Team (L.I.N.K.S.)
- ✓ Honorary Member for Enlisted Spouse Clubs
- ✓ Advisor for various spouse organizations

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Post and Relief/Protocol

The actual ceremony is covered by Marine Corps Regulations. The role of the outgoing spouse is to plan and host the reception. Normally the incoming spouse assists with splitting the costs.

Tips for a successful Post and Relief Reception include:

- ✓ Detailed planning to reduce stress and enhance coordination.
- ✓ The ceremony. Ensure you provide a list of family and friends and their addresses to your spouse to turn into the command. This should be done at least a week or more prior to the invitations being sent out.
- ✓ Make a budget and stick to it. Coordinate this budget with the incoming spouse and include the incoming spouse in the planning process, if possible.
- ✓ Usually receptions are held at the clubs. Use the club wherever possible. If not, find yourself a reliable caterer.
- ✓ Shop for your outfit early and remember comfortable shoes are a must.
- ✓ Ask for a list of reception attendees from the command to include full names.
- ✓ Flowers for both incoming and outgoing spouses are paid and arranged for by their respective spouses. Remind your spouse.
- ✓ Both incoming and outgoing spouses are expected to participate in the receiving line after the ceremony.

Stand during “Colors,” “National Anthem,” and “National Anthems” of other countries.

Stand during the playing of the “Marines Hymn.” As a courtesy, stand during the playing of other Service Hymns. If not sure, follow the lead of the Senior Spouse.

Stand during the playing of “Taps.”

Volunteerism

Volunteerism is a good way to meet new people and to show your support. Volunteering can be very beneficial to others and personally rewarding. Attend as many events as often as you can. It is important to attend volunteer recognition ceremonies.

Methods of Communication

Be very clear on the message you are trying to send or receive. If you don’t understand, always ask questions. Keep an open mind when communicating. Always remember that it’s not what you say, it’s how you say it. Use good eye contact, always listen, and think before speaking.

Partnerships

Breaking the Ice With the CO/CG’s Spouse

When a new CO/CG comes aboard, make the first step in meeting the spouse. Be proactive. Arrange a meeting, either at home or invite them to lunch. Introduce yourself and welcome them with a small gift.

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The first meeting is always critical. This will pave the way for your future relationships with each of them.

Be yourself. Let them know that you will help out. Tell them your schedule, so they will know what you will and will not be available for. Let them know if you work outside or inside the home and/or have children at home. Explain that you are looking forward to partnering with them as much as possible, and that your hope is to be able to share knowledge and experience with each other.

Relationships

Key Relationships

It is important to know who holds the key positions at your base. Introduce yourself to these people. These people will be able to help you with anything you want to achieve during your tour.

Key relationships include relationships with key volunteers, families, the LINKS coordinator, and the CO's or CG's spouse. The senior enlisted member's spouse should become acquainted with all key persons to create a working relationship for the benefit of the command. You might start by attending the key volunteers and LINKS classes. Then you are in a better position to encourage others to attend and get involved. Meet with the senior enlisted spouses to establish a relationship with them. Then they can help you reach the other families. If you have a budget, sponsor an event; if not, perhaps you could have a potluck event.

Be careful not to intimidate. Encourage others to participate.

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Setting the Example and Mentoring Others

Always remember that you represent your spouse and his/her command, as well as yourself. People are always looking at you. You should always conduct yourself in a proper fashion.

Make a schedule that allows you to balance work, home, and command responsibilities. If you work outside the home, keep your employer advised of your spouse's position and your responsibilities as a military spouse. Let your employer know about military functions as far in advance as possible. Build a relationship of mutual respect.

When a spouse comes to you for advice or information, listen carefully first, without judgment. Help them solve their own problem rather than telling them what to do. This is a great tool for helping people and guiding them in the right direction.

The most important thing to remember is that you cannot solve everyone's problem; therefore, direct him or her to the people who are trained to do so. If a key volunteer family tree system is set up, ensure that people are matched with those who have similar interests. If someone is paired with a key volunteer whom they are uncomfortable with, he/she may not seek the help needed.

Tips

- ✓ Keep a positive attitude.
- ✓ Always treat everyone the way you would like to be treated.
- ✓ If you offend someone, correct the situation as soon as possible.
- ✓ Be seen and be approachable.

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Community Involvement

Community issues go hand in hand with military issues. The community supports the military, and the military supports the community.

Get to know the retired military members who are local business owners. They can be very beneficial to you (Toys for Tots, command activities, etc.)

Combining the community and the military through volunteering is a great way to bridge both communities.

Encourage your children to volunteer. This will help them see themselves as part of the community. Volunteer service also gives young people valuable experience that will help them later on, in qualifying for scholarships, college admission, employment, etc.

Find out if there is a Veteran Affairs Committee, and if so arrange to meet with them and gather information that you can pass on.

The USO, VFW, and local Red Cross chapter always need volunteers and are a good source of information. Do all that you can for them.

Be familiar with all of the organizations on your base; but, you do not necessarily need to be an integral part of each one. Examples include LINKS, Navy Marine Corps Relief Society, Family Service Center, and Family Advocacy.

Marine Corps Community Services is a good source of information for on-base and off-base community events.

Enlisted Spouse Clubs and SNCO Spouse Groups

These groups give you and the other spouses a chance to get to know one another. It also gives you and other spouses a chance to impart your knowledge and experience as a senior enlisted spouse. They do a lot of beneficial things, such as giving scholarships, running a thrift shop, and donating to the Salvation Army and other service organizations.

The spouse clubs are a great resource place for information. A lot of these clubs include retired spouses who have valuable information to share.

Encourage all spouses to join.

Tips for getting new spouses to join:

- ✓ Give information about the clubs to those representatives to pass on to the spouses in their respective commands.
- ✓ Include the unit representatives in your monthly meetings so they can provide more accurate feedback to their commands.
- ✓ Set up a booth during base events to get the information out and invite new members to join.
- ✓ Register with the Family Service Center so they can include the club in the Welcome Aboard package.

Etiquette and Social Obligations

Functions: Proper Attire

When in doubt, ask the hostess. A good time to do this would be when you are responding to the

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invitation. Try to create a traditional wardrobe. The best thing to add to your wardrobe is a basic black suit and a black dress. Keep your jewelry simple. Be yourself.

Do:

- ✓ Respond to an invitation within 48 hours of receiving it (R.S.V.P.)
- ✓ Find out what each geographical area meanings for the word “casual”
- ✓ Be on time
- ✓ When going to someone’s home for the first time, bring a gift for the hostess, e.g., flowers, candy, bottle of wine, etc.
- ✓ After attending a function – send a thank you note, handwritten is preferred
- ✓ Be sure you arrive promptly
- ✓ When walking or standing with your spouse, position yourself on his/her left so your spouse can salute when needed

Don’t:

- ✗ Overdress, e.g., after 6 p.m. Do not wear large floral print with bright colors, etc.
- ✗ Wear short-shorts or jeans to any function other than an outdoor barbecue.
- ✗ Wear overpowering perfume
- ✗ Smoke at functions, e.g., Change of Command, Post & Relief

Dress Code (excerpt from Parade Rest)

The following guidelines are based on the protocol requirements of Washington, D.C. In other areas of the country, such as California or Hawaii, social occasions may call for less formal attire. When in doubt as to local social customs, ask a friend.

- ❑ ***The terms “very casual,” “casual,” “informal or civilian informal” and “formal” are those commonly used on invitations.***

Very Casual

- ✓ Women - slacks, shorts, sweater, skirt/blouse
- ✓ Men - shorts, slacks, jeans - open neck shirt/sweater

Casual

- ✓ Women - dress, skirt and blouse, dressy slacks
- ✓ Men - open collared shirt and sweater/sports jacket

Civilian Informal

- ✓ Women - dressy dress, suit
- ✓ Men - suit and tie

Formal

- ✓ Women - formal short or long dress
- ✓ Men - the designated uniform or black tie
- ✓ At formal evening receptions, the formality of the occasion is sometimes indicated by the words black tie written, engraved, or printed on the invitation

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❑ ***There are many social events throughout the year, and the following dress code will help you feel at home for each one:***

- ✓ Afternoon Teas: Civilian Informal
- ✓ Birthday Ball: Formal
- ✓ Brunch: Civilian Informal
- ✓ Cocktail Party: Civilian Informal
- ✓ Cookouts: Very Casual
- ✓ Dinners: Informal, Formal
- ✓ Dining In: Formal
- ✓ Luncheon: Civilian Informal
- ✓ Morning or Evening Coffee: Business Casual
- ✓ Parade: Civilian Informal
- ✓ Reception: Formal, Informal

A basic suit for a man or a suit/dress for a woman is always right for any casual or civilian informal event.

As host and hostess you must be careful how you extend your invitations. When you write or say informal when you mean casual, you will be at fault when your guests show up in coat and tie and find you dressed in jeans and sandals. Remember, informal means coat and tie, casual means sports attire.

Such words as informal, and civilian informal are written or printed in the lower right-hand corner of the invitation

If you are not sure of what to do at any function, refer to the “Roses and Thorns” Handbook.

Manners & Appropriate Discussions

Proper manners are a must at any dinner table. Most of us know our basic table manners. When you attend a sit down dinner always wait until the hostess or the guest of honor picks up their fork first. At an event, always wait until everyone at the table has been served.

Conversation

Good conversation is an asset to every social gathering. You should keep discussions simple. Stay with neutral topics, e.g., children, weather, where you are from, hobbies, etc. The very best topics of conversation are ideas, then places and events. Avoid gossip. Social functions are not the place to gossip or feed the rumor mill. Remember the old rule; think before you speak. It can make the difference between everyone having a pleasant evening or a bad experience resulting in not wanting to attend other functions. Do not talk about your spouse’s job to anyone.

Smoking Rules

Never smoke at a formal or official occasion such as a wedding, a reception, or a parade.

When there are no ashtrays in a home, or on the dining table, the hosts do not want any smoking.

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Some people find the smoke from pipes and cigars stronger and more offensive than cigarette smoke; be especially careful in a car or enclosed area.

Entertaining

As a senior enlisted spouse, there is no budget set aside for entertaining. Try to be creative when decorating & entertaining. Plan as far ahead as possible and stay organized.

Ensure follow-up on your guest list and include an RSVP. Always let your guests know how to dress, e.g., casual, informal, or formal. If you don't mind jeans, say "jeans are o.k."

Allow 10 to 15 minutes up front to spend with your guests.

Use your family for extra help when entertaining at home.

When you are having dinner parties at your home, keep your numbers small. If you are doing a social, or gathering, you can increase your numbers keeping within your budget.

For potluck, have a special area set aside and ready for guests to place their dish. To ensure you will not have all potatoes and no meat, have a menu in mind so that you can ask your guests to bring specific items.

Try using a theme for the dinner, for example, Italian, Mexican or Hawaiian. Use your imagination to be creative when decorating and entertaining. For dinner parties, use cloth napkins and glass serving pieces instead of plastic (unless it is an outdoor BBQ).

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Food – Excerpt from Service Etiquette

- ❑ **Cocktail food** – *Should be delicious, but a guest invited to a cocktail party other than cocktails-buffet should eventually move away from the table or tray of food. Roast ham, turkey, or beef, with hot and cold breads, seafood, elaborate dips, broiled olives wrapped in bacon, bite-size biscuits filled with hot mixtures, miniature meat balls on toothpicks -- many of these may be served at a large party, and several are often served at small affairs.*
- ❑ **Small Parties** – *Cocktail parties may be small affairs for perhaps a dozen friends, with the host mixing and serving drinks from a tray placed at a convenient spot in the room. Cocktail food may be simple or lavish, with guests serving themselves or with waiters passing the food around the room. But at any party, be sure there of plenty of glasses of various sizes.*
- ❑ **Cocktails-Buffer** – *A popular type of cocktail party is called cocktails-buffet. The time is usually 6:30 P.M. The main purpose of the hosts in indicating, cocktails-buffet on their invitation is to inform the guests that they need not make other plans for supper. As a guest, you are expected to partake of the buffet-style food, which is more elaborate than the usual cocktail fare. The table is covered with a cloth, and there will be a centerpiece of fruit or flowers. You can expect such food as roast beef, ham, seafood, and a number of hot dishes.*

Classifications of Entertaining – Excerpt from Service Etiquette

- ❑ **Informal:** *The hostess serves two or three courses, at the table or buffet style. The host will assist.*

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❑ **Semiformal:** *There is service at the table, with the host and hostess helping somewhat (mostly before the meal); three or four courses.*

❑ **Formal:** *There is full service at the table, with no assistance from the host and hostess; waiters or waitresses serve four or five courses.*

❑ **The Family Dinner:**

❑ The table may be simply set, with mats or a cloth, and a small bowl of flowers or a simple decoration as the centerpiece.

❑ The water glasses should be filled before the family sits down, and each salad placed on the left of and above the forks.

❑ **The Buffet Supper:** *The buffet supper is a way to serve a large number of guests in a small space with or without help, and is the best type of get-acquainted party.*

❑ At such a meal the table is placed so that guests may easily move around it and serve themselves. The table is usually covered with a cloth. There should be a centerpiece, not too large, and several sets of salt and pepper.

❑ The stacks of plates, napkins, rows of silver, and platters and bowls of food are placed in sequence around the table. Serving forks and spoons are near the dishes they accompany. Dinner forks may be the only silver on the table, since a wise hostess does not serve foods that are difficult to cut, but knives are placed on the table if needed.

❑ When there is no help, everything is placed in the dining area for convenience in serving. A water pitcher and glasses, coffee service, and wine decanter and glasses may be on a sideboard or convenient

table, if not on the dining table. Dessert, dessert plates, and silver may also be on the sideboard, or they may be placed on the table or sideboard after the dishes for the main course have been taken away.

- ❑ At buffet suppers, three courses, as well as hot buttered rolls or biscuits, are usually offered.

❑ **The Sit-Down Buffet** – *The sit-down buffet table is set as it would be for dinner, with the exceptions of the plates and the main course, which are placed on the sideboard for guests to serve themselves. The napkins, silver, glasses, salt and pepper, and butter plates are all in place on the table.*

- ❑ Place mats are usually used, and a centerpiece. If small tables – card tables – are used instead of the larger table, the centerpiece is small to save space.
- ❑ The dessert silver may be in place above the space for the plate, and butter plates are a matter of convenience. When dessert is served from the kitchen, the dessert silver is on the dessert plate.

❑ **Formal Dinners** – *Today's formal dinner was termed semiformal in days when steward or waiters were easily obtained. The main difference between today's formal – or semiformal – dinner and the truly formal dinner is in the service: fewer waiters will serve fewer courses to the same number of people, and black tie or its equivalent is usually worn by the men, with women in dinner dresses.*

- ❑ The sit-down buffet is a favorite form of less formal entertaining, when the very nicest appointments are used, with the least service. Table decorations are as elaborate as any of the most formal table.

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- ❑ A tablecloth of linen, damask, or lace may be used, or mats of the same materials. The silver will be either sterling or an attractive substitute; the glassware may be clear or jewel tones; and butter plates may be used.

❑ **Résumé**

Informal Dinner Rules

- ❑ When the invitation states informal, a man wears a dark or light business suit, in season, and a woman wears afternoon dress. Informal means coat and tie after 6:00 P.M.
- ❑ For a casual occasion — say a barbecue or a supper around the swimming pool — sports attire is worn. The hostess must be certain that guests are informed when the occasion is casual.

Formal Dinner Rules

- ❑ Men wear black tie or the military equivalent. Women wear dinner dress or the military equivalent.
- ❑ **Teas** — *Teas for a few or many guests, usually start at 4:00 P.M., and frequently are given to introduce someone: a newcomer, a house-guest, or a very special person. Guests should arrive no later than half an hour before the last hour indicated in the invitations.*
- ❑ In a home, a tea is held in the dining area, the table covered with a lace or elaborate cloth. The plates of food, the stacks of little tea plates, the napkins, cups, and saucers, are arranged in a balanced pattern in relation to the floral centerpiece and to the two trays — one for the tea service and one for the coffee service — which are placed at opposite ends of the table. The cups and saucers are close to the tea and coffee services.

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- ❑ The food at teas is varied, but will include thin sandwiches and small cakes. There may be small rolls or biscuits filled with hot creamed chicken, seafood, or ham, tarts, pastries, cake, nuts, and mints, as well as tea and coffee with lemon, cream, and sugar. The serving of tea starts as soon as the first guests arrive, with the hostess greeting each guest upon arrival. Friends of the hostess, including the CO's spouse, are asked to pour.
- ❑ Afternoon dress is worn, but not hats or gloves as in former years.

❑ ***Setting the Table*** – A basic rule in setting any table, formal or informal, is that crowding must be avoided; there should be at least 24 inches of table space for each person. Another rule is that everything on the table must balance. The centerpiece in the middle of the table is balanced by any other decorations placed around it, unless the table is against the wall, such as at a large buffet, when space is needed. In that case, the centerpiece is closer to the wall.

❑ ***At the Table***

- ❑ Use your napkin before drinking from a glass of water in order not to leave traces of food on the glass. Never lick your fingers after they have been in contact with food – use your napkin.

Entertaining – Excerpt from Parade Rest

There are many types of entertaining. These general guidelines may be helpful whether you are the host or a guest.

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- ❑ **Buffet Meal** – Guests serve themselves from a buffet table and eat at appointed locations throughout the house. Later, the host or hostess may choose to pass the foods or ask the guests to return for seconds. Guests' help only if asked to do so; otherwise, there can be kitchen confusion. Coffee and desert may be passed or served in the dining room.
- ❑ **Brunch** – Brunch is similar to any informal luncheon or dinner, except that a type of breakfast menu is served. It usually begins before noon, and guest may be seated or served buffet style.
- ❑ **Cocktail Buffet** – This party differs from a cocktail party because meal-like hors d'oeuvres are served.
- ❑ **Cocktail Party** – Often units use this type of party to say hail and farewell, entertain specific guests, or just visit socially. It is especially designed for larger groups. Along with a variety of beverages, there should always be a nonalcoholic beverage choice. Finger foods – including heavy or light hors d'oeuvres – are also served. Drinks may be passed or served from a bar.
- ❑ **Coffee** – This type of get-together occurs in the morning but may also take place in the evening to accommodate those who work. It provides a good opportunity for wives to get acquainted informally. Coffee, tea, and a fruit drink are offered with a variety of finger foods, coffee cakes or special desserts.
- ❑ **Coffee and Dessert** – Guests are invited after dinner to enjoy one or more desserts and coffees. The host or hostess may serve these, or the guests may serve themselves buffet style.

- ❑ **Cookout** – *a great way to relax and enjoy friends is a cookout. The menu may range from hotdogs to shish kebabs. Paper cups, plates, and napkins are perfect.*
- ❑ **Formal Seated Meal** – *Reviewing a formal place setting in an etiquette book is good preparation for any formal dinner. When in doubt about which fork or glass to use, watch the hostess or head table. A seating chart or escort card designate dinner partners and tables. Place cards are found on the tables. The guest of honor is seated on the right of the host (hostess if there is no host). Enlisted aides, waiters, or waitresses serve several courses. Smoking is allowed only if ashtrays are provided, and the host or hostess offers cigarettes to the guests.*
- ❑ **Informal Seated Meal** – *The main difference between formal and informal meals is that the hostess serves the table. Food may be passed or served family style. The guests help only if asked to do so. The host may pour coffee while the hostess prepares the dessert. With a little prior planning, the hostess will be able to remain seated during most of the meal. The fewer times she leaves the table, the more the guests will relax.*
- ❑ **Open House** – *Opening your home to entertain friends and other guests informally is often called an open house. This type of party is particularly nice for large groups during the holiday season when decorations and home-baked refreshments add to the festivities.*
- ❑ **Potluck** – *A potluck is a lot of fun and easy for everyone. The hostess may plan the theme and provide the beverage and eating utensils. Everyone else is asked to bring a dish to share. There are many types of potlucks, and they work well for large and small groups.*

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- ❑ ***Progressive Dinner*** – Several couples may plan the dinner together. One couple serves drinks and hors d’oeuvres at their home. The main course is served at another home; and finally, dessert and coffee are offered at a third location. Timing and travel instructions are important, but this can be great fun for neighbors.
- ❑ ***Tea*** – An excellent way for women to entertain is at a formal afternoon tea. Often, there is a guest of honor, and the guests greet her in a receiving line. The tea table is set with the finest linens, china, and silver. Tea, punch, and dainty finger foods are served. It is an honor to be asked, “to pour.”

❑ ***Additional Tips:***

- ❑ If someone entertains you, it is always thoughtful to entertain him or her in return. You may choose any reciprocal style of entertaining you wish.
- ❑ A host or hostess will always offer a choice of nonalcoholic drinks if alcoholic drinks are served. When you are a guest, always specify which type of beverage you prefer.
- ❑ Although a Marine’s career does not depend on the quality or quantity of your entertaining, it certainly makes life in the Corps more pleasant and enjoyable. So, as you entertain, remember that smiles, thoughtfulness, and a good sense of humor will always win friends and put everyone, including yourself, at ease. Just be yourself and set your own style within your means.

❑ **Escorts**

- ❑ At a buffet dinner the host and hostess may escort the guests of honor through the buffet line. It is thoughtful to ask another couple to follow them through the line and to their seats so that the honored guests will not be left to begin eating alone.

Your Thanks

You do not write or telephone a host or hostess after all social occasions. A sincere expression of thanks at the time of leaving the party is generally sufficient. If many guests phone after a very large party, the hosts would be on the line for hours.

After any pleasant or special occasion (especially a small one), the hosts would be pleased to hear that you enjoyed their hospitality, and a note or phone call is in order.

All social invitations are answered promptly, preferably within a day or two. Thank-you notes should be written within 48 hours after the occasion. A note takes only a few minutes of your time, but this small courtesy is invaluable in matters of manners and good will.

Thank you notes should be handwritten the next day, but not later than a week after receiving a gift, attending an event, or being a houseguest. However, a late thank you is better than none at all!

Anyone who has many social engagements should keep a record of them in order not to overlook an obligation. Such a record includes the names of the hosts, their rank, address, and type of occasion — dinner, lunch, cocktails, etc. — as well as the date.

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Marine Family

Making a Good Impression

You are the link between the Marine Family and the command. As the senior spouse, your first impressions are lasting ones. You should make the first move in getting acquainted with the command, Marines, and family. Take a walk through your spouse's command and meet the Marines (chat a minute or two). It might not be an easy step to do (if you are shy) however, you are important to your family's success in this new and unfamiliar environment. Make yourself visible in the command. Make it a point to talk to the Marines and inquire about meeting their spouse.

You are the eyes and ears for your family, your spouse, and the entire enlisted community.

You have to learn to be independent and support your family. You are a source of strength and energy vital to your spouse and family's home.

Family Readiness

Read all the information packages you receive! You will find a wealth of information.

As a Marine family you already know the stress of moving and your spouse being away for long periods of time. It is important that you sit down and talk to your family about their responsibility as the senior enlisted family.

Key Information Sources

Know information regarding: Red Cross, Family Services Center, Navy Relief, Key Volunteer, Exceptional Family Member Program, and LINKS. You should receive this information when you come aboard a new command; however, if not, contact your command. This information is important during your stay.

During Permanent Change of Station (PCS)

An outgoing courtesy to the people who supported you (people who showed you untiring courtesy) and to the incoming senior enlisted spouse is for you to have a small, informal social gathering. At this informal social, you can pass information to the spouse about their responsibilities to the command, provide some helpful tips and useful resources, and key contacts.

During Deployment/War Time

As a senior enlisted spouse, remember, you are no longer a Key Volunteer Coordinator. You are a Key Volunteer Advisor along with the Commander's spouse. You are the source of information and the point of contact for the Key Volunteer Coordinator, providing information to Marine spouses during deployments.

Remember, if we take care of family business and ourselves, we are able and stable enough to help our Marines and their families during these times. Make sure you have updated wills, insurance policies, general power of attorney and other pertinent documents pertaining to your spouse's deployment.

Side-by-side

As a senior enlisted spouse, ensure that you are familiar with the deployment procedures of the command. Get acquainted and familiarize yourself with the Red Cross and resources available through them. Be prepared to give out information if an emergency should come up and what procedures you should follow. You are a source of information and a link for the Marine family. Be knowledgeable and willing to assist during these stressful times.

While On Station

Get to know the functions of the base and learn about the Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS). Know what organizations are on your base and their functions

Preparing for Retirement

This is our last stop with the Marine Corps. You must be prepared to go out into the civilian world, and that's exactly where you will be going. Start preparing for your retirement several years before it really happens.

Go to all the seminars (pre-retirement and retirement) that are available to you and your spouse. This will start you in the right direction!

Attend Transition Assistance Program (TAP) with your spouse. TAP covers the benefits you are entitled to, such as survivor, medical, dental, and Tri-Care benefits, etc.

Go to the Family Services Center and take advantage of the classes that they have to offer in resume writing, interviewing skills, dressing for success, etc.

A Guide For Senior Enlisted Spouses

Miscellaneous

Remember, spouses have no rank.

Name tags are best worn on the right side so that they can be easily read when introduced.

Always sit behind the driver when you and your spouse are in the car. If there are two spouses, the junior spouse sits behind the driver.

❑ ***VIP visits:*** *From time-to-time VIPs may visit. If the VIP's spouse accompanies him or her, here are some easy points to remember:*

- ❑ Check the room or quarters where the guests will be staying
- ❑ Allow some "downtime" for your guest to get settled/relaxed
- ❑ Be sure the quarters or room has snacks and drinks to hold them over to the next meal or function

❑ ***Here is a formula that may help you adjust to your new position and help you to partner with the CO/CG;s spouse: C.P.R.***

- ❑ Communicate
- ❑ Partnership
- ❑ Respect

Side-by-side

The Seven Do's

- ✓ Do get in touch when you get to your new duty station.
- ✓ Do give respect.
- ✓ Do listen – two heads are better than one.
- ✓ Do invite her to have a cup of coffee at the mall or coffee shop.
- ✓ Do a reminder when an event is going on – sometimes a slip of the mind happens.
- ✓ Do keep in touch. Let her know if it is okay to call you sometimes.
- ✓ A sincere thank you will be okay.

The Seven Don'ts

- ✗ Don't wait for her to make the first call.
- ✗ Don't do all the talking.
- ✗ Don't call her Sue and you want to be addressed Mrs. Smith.
- ✗ Don't talk on subjects only you know about.
- ✗ Don't make contact if you are not sincere.
- ✗ Don't introduce yourself followed with your husband's rank – she will probably know who you are already.
- ✗ Don't be a dictator.

